

Teacher Quality Report

Education Interim Committee

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Preparing, Supporting and Sustaining High Quality Educators for All Students

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Teacher Quality

The link between teacher quality and student achievement is no longer an unanswered question. Everyone now understands that quality teachers make a difference. The question that remains is how to best ensure that more high quality teachers enter the profession and stay in Utah classrooms. In order to address this issue we must pay attention to the entire career continuum of an educator. The Utah State Office of Education in cooperation with the Utah Legislature, the Utah State Board of Education university teacher preparation programs and LEA leadership developed and supported noteworthy programs this past year that aim to make a difference in teacher recruitment, retention and quality.

Teacher Preparation

A highly qualified and highly effective teacher in every Utah classroom

A **K-6 license** was established to provide additional flexibility for districts to meet the shortages of Kindergarten teachers. Teacher preparation programs are adding courses that focus on early childhood practice and pedagogy. All Utah teacher preparation institutions will offer a K-6 license by fall of 2009.

Alternative Route to Licensure (ARL) candidates have steadily increased in number. From January 1 to October 10, 2008, 975 applications were processed and over 150 have been licensed. In 2004 a teacher specialist was hired and courses were developed and offered to support a full ARL program. Approximately half of the participants are obtaining elementary licenses; the other half are working towards a secondary license. Science, Math and English are the top three endorsements requested by the secondary applicants. In 2007 charter schools employed 142 ARL participants. Granite Jordan, Davis and Washington Districts combined hired 160 candidates; private/parochial schools employed 62.

The growth of this program is noted in the chart below. As instructed in SJR001 (sponsored by Sen. Dayton) a letter was sent to all LEA heads promoting the ARL program. The current challenge is keeping pace with supporting individual growth plans in order for applicants to complete the program.

(Three-year Comparison)

Applications Jan - Dec 2005	249	Applications Jan - Dec 2006	527	Applications Jan - Dec 2007	663
Applicants hired Jan - Dec 2005	94	Applicants hired Jan - Dec 2006	229	Applicants from Jan - Dec 2007	313
Participants completing ARL in 2005	85	Participants completing ARL in 2006	108	Participants completing ARL in 2007	160

Teacher Recruitment

Creating multiple outreach opportunities for potential employees

Statewide Employment Application - Out of state and Utah prepared teacher candidates may apply for positions in all districts and charters using one statewide online application. The *Utah Educator Employment Application* (powered by Teachers.Teachers.com) can be found on district and USOE websites. Utah receives the fifth greatest number of inquiries in the nation for teaching jobs. A teacher candidate uploads transcripts and their preparation information onto the website which can be transferred to one application. The candidate can then send this application electronically to any district and charter in the state. With one statewide application, candidates are more likely to access a number of LEAs by reducing paperwork.

Returning Educator Initiative - As reported in May of 2007 an untapped supply of teachers resides among teachers who left the teaching profession and let their licenses lapse yet may have a desire to return to teaching. The *Returning Educator Initiative* (HB0068 sponsored by Rep. Menlove) allows teachers to receive a license based on a professional development plan that is targeted to their individual needs and jointly created between the educator and their supervisor. Since May 2008 we have processed 45 plans and have received nothing but positive feedback from “returning” educators.

Paraeducator to Teacher Scholarship - The purpose of the Paraeducator to Teacher Scholarship (HB0066 sponsored by Rep. Menlove) is to provide funds to paraeducators seeking to become licensed educators. Paraeducators who deliver instruction under the direct supervision of a teacher and work in the areas of special education, Title I or ESL are eligible to apply. The 2008 legislature appropriated \$25,000 which provided 17 scholarships selected from 180 paraeducators applicants.

Teacher Retention

Continual growth and satisfaction with the teaching profession

Quality Mentoring - The induction period is a critical period for new teachers. The Entry Years Enhancement (EYE) program supports teachers during this period through mentoring by a trained mentor, reflection of progress via a portfolio, successful evaluations and passing Board approved exams for verification of content and pedagogical knowledge. The Utah State Office of Education has increased efforts to provide statewide support for mentor training as this seems to be the most critical factor of the EYE program.

Recent exit data indicate that a quality mentor makes a difference in the retention of new teachers. These data also indicate that those districts and charters that have quality mentoring programs have higher rates of retention. Research points to the criticality of providing time during the work day for mentors to be released to observe and provide feedback to novice teachers. Effective mentors are skilled in the language of coaching, demonstrate content knowledge and effective instructional skills in their own classroom and are collegial with peers in order to achieve school wide success.

Entry and Exit Data – The Office of Educator Quality and Licensing undertook an initiative to better understand issues of recruitment and retention. The CACTUS system provided data that described the group of newly hired teachers; a statewide online exit survey was used to gather data on departing teachers. The data were collected for the 2007-2008 school year to create this initial report.

Some of the findings are as follows:

Entry data on “freshman” class of 2007-2008

- 3,516 total teachers hired (3,078 districts, 438 charter)
- 18.5% reported ethnicity as other than Caucasian
- 81.2% female
- 58% serving in elementary, 18% middle, 20% high school
- 83% have had no experience in Utah schools
- 10% have had experience teaching outside of Utah
- 22% of ARL new hires are in charter schools

Exit data from teachers leaving the profession in 2007-2008 (sample size 766)

- 26.2% between ages of 25-30
- 23.6% taught for over 26 years
- 33.7% taught for three years or less
- 18.7% moving to another state or city
- 19% staying home with family
- 5.3% dissatisfied with teaching
- 31.1% retiring

Online Licensure - The use of technology has become very important to the internal efficiency and high quality customer service of licensing processes. Educators can now initiate a background check, obtain a student teacher license, or renew an educator license online. The Office of Educator Quality and Licensing was recently awarded the national *2008 Digital Education Achievement Award* by the Center for Digital Education and Government based on our interactive online license processes.

Professional Development Standards - Teachers report being satisfied with teaching when they have administrative support and the resources needed to teach CORE curriculum effectively. One of the resources often mentioned is the need for quality professional development and time and support to practice what they’ve learned. Many states have adopted a set of research based professional development standards that guide their work. Grants and programs that include professional development must then incorporate these standards in order to receive funding.

Current statute and Board policy needs to reflect findings from research. For example 53A-3-701 and 53A-17a-124 include outdated language that doesn’t hold school systems accountable for providing quality, job embedded professional development that results in improved teacher knowledge and skills. The Utah State Board of Education should take the lead through standards based policy and modeling of best professional development practices in order to impact professional growth for teachers.